

Naval War College Review

Volume 69
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 2

2016

From the Editors

Carnes Lord

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Lord, Carnes (2016) "From the Editors," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 69 : No. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol69/iss2/2>

This From the Editor is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

FROM THE EDITORS

Thirty years ago, the Goldwater-Nichols Act fundamentally reshaped the way the U.S. military goes about its business. Virtually everyone now on active duty is a child of the Goldwater-Nichols era. Distinct service cultures are still very much with us, but “jointness” is deeply embedded in the way our current military operates and thinks, as well as in the incentive structures that shape officers’ careers. It is legitimate to ask whether this has tended to obscure the unintended consequences and opportunity costs of our current joint system. In “The Effect of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 on Naval Strategy, 1987–1994,” Steven Wills traces the impact of this historic legislation on the Navy’s capacity to engage in strategic planning at the end of the Cold War. The emergence during this period of the regional combatant commands as the nexus of war planning reflected both the Goldwater-Nichols reforms and a dramatically altered strategic environment; a predictable consequence of this was a gradual decline in the strategic planning capability and capacity of the Navy Staff. As Wills indicates, the impact of all this on the Navy has been particularly challenging given the inherently global nature of American naval power. In very recent years, one should note, the Navy broadly has come to recognize the need to reconstitute a cadre of strategic thinkers and planners within its own ranks if it is to sustain its proper role in shaping America’s response to an increasingly threatening global strategic environment. Steven Wills is a retired surface warfare officer and a doctoral candidate in military history at Ohio University.

China’s ongoing efforts to establish a permanent presence in the South China Sea continue to pose a fundamental challenge to regional security and the international legal order. In trying to understand how the Chinese may employ force in the future to advance these efforts, it is important to give careful attention to their past behavior in the region. Toshi Yoshihara, in “The 1974 Paracels Sea Battle: A Campaign Appraisal,” provides a detailed analysis of China’s brief clash with the South Vietnamese navy over control of the Paracel Islands—the first-ever employment of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) against a foreign power. China’s victory, against a better-armed adversary, is a point of pride for today’s PLAN and has generated a substantial Chinese-language literature, much of which is exploited here for the first time. Toshi Yoshihara is a professor in the Strategy and Policy Department of the Naval War College.

To understand the evolution of China's naval capabilities over recent decades, it is important not to neglect the evolution of China's naval leadership. In "Who's at the Helm? The Past, Present, and Future Leaders of China's Navy," Jeffrey Becker offers a detailed assessment of the growing profile of the PLAN throughout the Chinese military establishment and the striking improvements in the professionalism of the current and emerging cohorts of China's naval leadership, above all through enhanced professional military education and greater interaction with foreign navies. Jeffrey Becker is an analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses China Studies Division.

Too often forgotten today, but also of considerable interest, is the maritime dimension of the final stages of the Chinese civil war. In "The Battle of Quemoy: The Amphibious Assault That Held the Postwar Military Balance in the Taiwan Strait," Maochun Miles Yu tells the story of the disastrous 1949 attempt by the People's Republic of China to dislodge a substantial Kuomintang force from the island of Quemoy, strategically situated just offshore of the port of Amoy, the natural embarkation point for an eventual invasion of Taiwan contemplated at the time by Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong. The outcome of this battle had long-term consequences: it secured Taiwan as an independent Nationalist entity and revived flagging American support for the cause of Chiang Kai-shek. Maochun Miles Yu is a professor at the U.S. Naval Academy.

In today's Navy, Alfred Thayer Mahan is more revered than read. Much of this reflects his ponderous and discursive writing style, but also the impression that his thought is hopelessly dated by the prejudices of his time, particularly his favorable view of American imperialism. In "National Interest and Moral Responsibility in the Thought of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan," Thomas F. X. Varacalli makes a compelling case that Mahan's grand strategic vision was more nuanced and complex than is generally credited, and indeed that it offers an interesting synthesis of elements of contemporary international relations theory that are usually seen as incompatible. Thomas F. X. Varacalli is a doctoral candidate in political science at Louisiana State University.

IF YOU VISIT US

Our editorial offices are now located in Sims Hall, in the Naval War College Coasters Harbor Island complex, on the third floor, west wing (rooms W334, 335, 309). For building-security reasons, it would be necessary to meet you at the main entrance and escort you to our suite—give us a call ahead of time (401-841-2236).